

A Conceptual Model of Military Turnover

Presented at NATO Technical Course HFM 180 – Strategies to
Address Recruiting Retention Issues of the Military

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Based on "*A Proposed Model Of Military Turnover*" (Sumer & van de Ven, 2007)

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Introduction

- ❑ Retention of the qualified military personnel is a major priority.
- ❑ Identification critical organizational, individual-, and job-related factors in military turnover has utility value.
- ❑ One of the main missions of the NATO Task Group (TG) on Military Recruitment and Retention was to develop a conceptual framework of military turnover.
- ❑ A conceptual model of military turnover has been developed based on the reviewed literature and the work done by the TG members.

Evaluation of Turnover Models

Early Models of Turnover (Newman, 1974; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974):

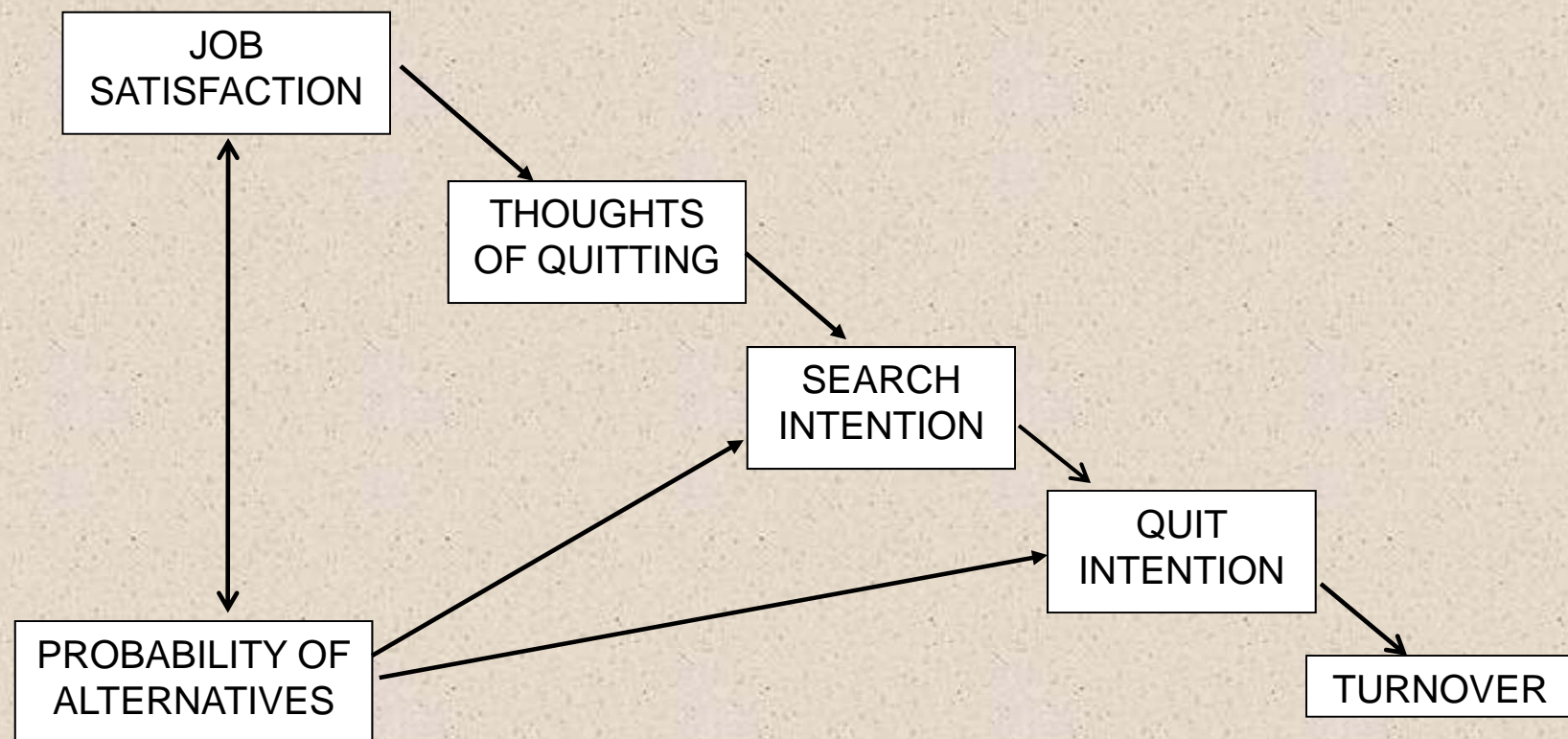
- ❑ Simple models relating turnover directly to job attitudes like satisfaction and commitment

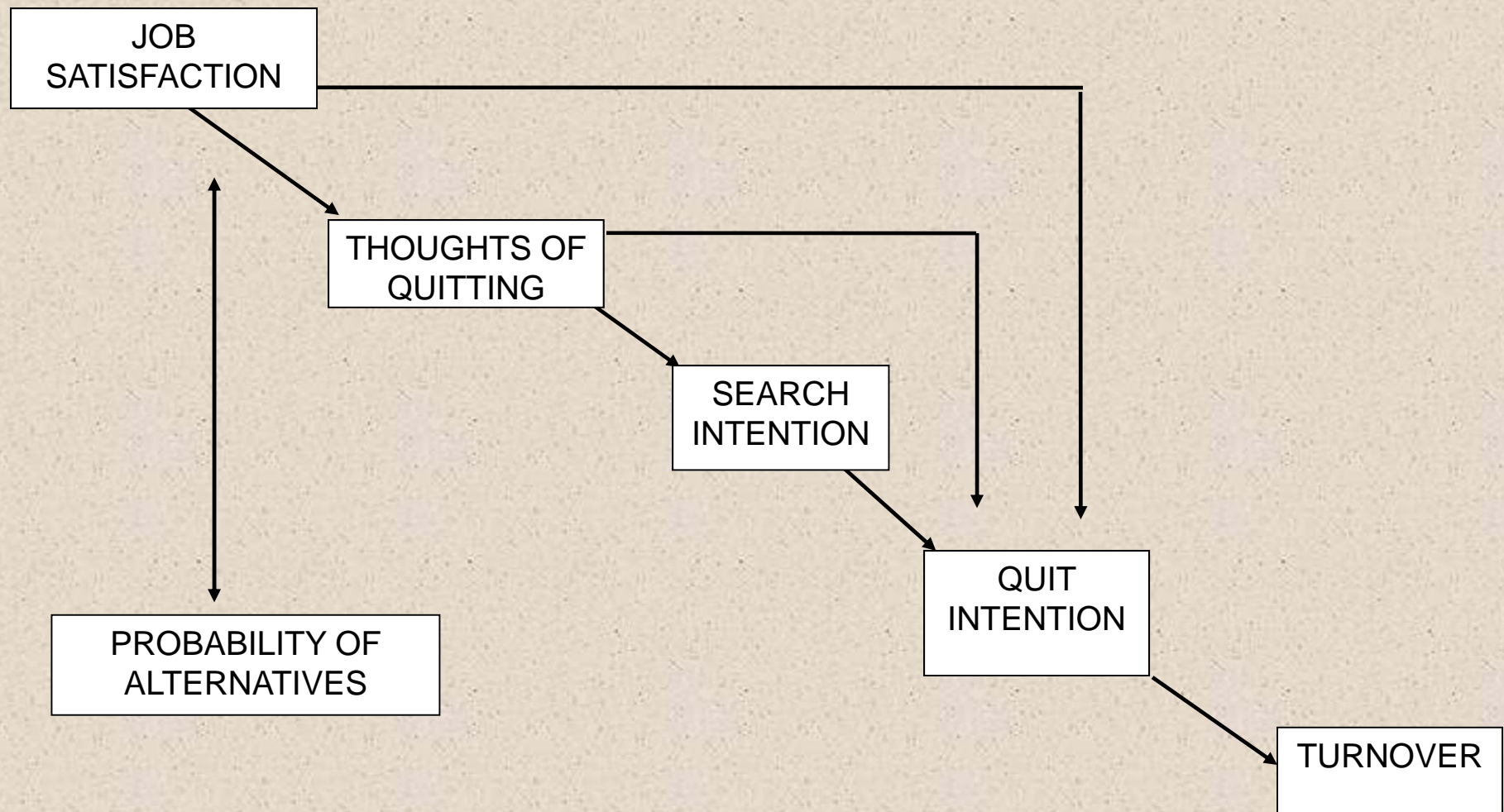
Evaluation of Turnover Models

Late Models of Turnover (e.g., Bannister & Griffeth, 1986; Dallessio, Silverman, & Schuck, 1986; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978):

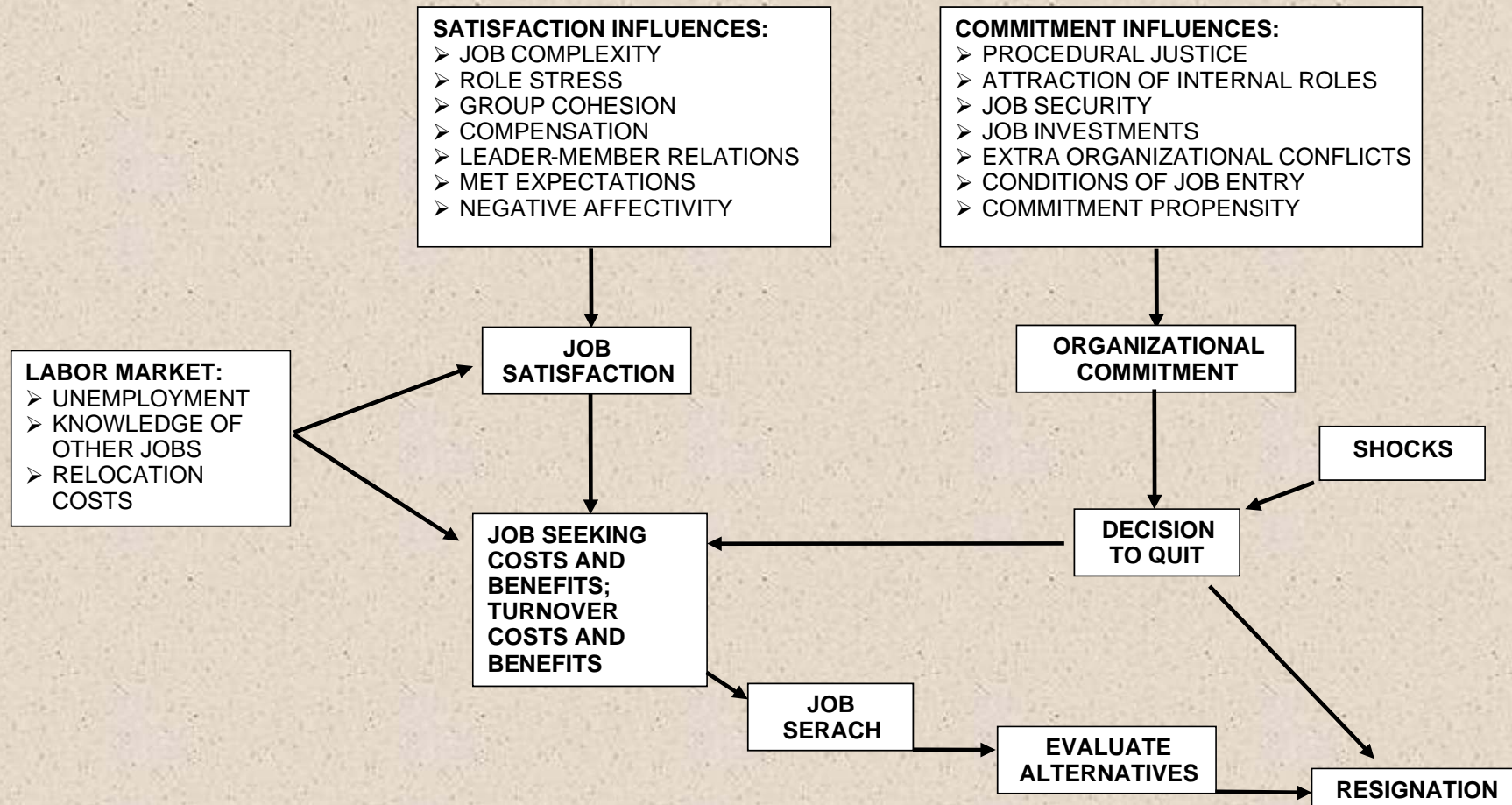
- Increasingly complex, yet still attitude-centered
- The decision-making processes involved in the withdrawal process are emphasized
- Civilian-based

Example I – Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth's (1978) Model





Example III – Griffeth and Hom's (2001) Model



Proposed Model

Factors expected to play a critical role in military turnover:

□ **Distal Factors –**

- Job and Organizational Characteristics
- Perceived Job Alternatives

□ **Intermediate Factors –**

- Individual Characteristics: Person-Organization Fit
- Quality of Life (QoL) Concerns
- Work Attitudes - Job Satisfaction, Continuance Commitment, and Affective Commitment

□ **Proximal Factors –**

- Turnover Intentions
- Unemployment Rate
- Critical Life Events/Shocks

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

- ❑ Job and organizational factors consists physical, procedural, social, and emotional aspects characterizing the work situation.
- ❑ Consistent with the proposed recruitment model, a distinction has been made between instrumental and non instrumental job and organizational characteristics.

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

- ❑ Instrumental Characteristics (not an exhaustive list):
 - Compensation (Pay and Benefits) – (e.g., Kerce, 1995; Dowden, 2000)
 - Workload (e.g., Dunn & Morrow, 2002)
 - Optempo and perstempo (e.g., Castro & Adler, 1999; Dunn & Morrow, 2002; Huffman et al., 2000)
 - Role stress (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 2001)
 - Unmet expectations (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Richardson, 2003; van de Ven, 2003)
 - Distributive justice (e.g., McIntrye et al., 2002)

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

❑ Instrumental Characteristics Critical in Military Turnover:

■ Workload-related factors

- ❑ Perstempo & Opstempo (Dunn & Morrow, 2002)
- ❑ Job pressure (Sanchez et al., 2004)
- ❑ Work load & role clarity (Bliese & Castro, 2000)

■ Working conditions

- ❑ Frequent & long deployments, overnight duty, long working hours
- ❑ Rotating shifts vs. fixed shifts (Demerouti et al., 2004)

■ Distributive justice (i.e., "*fairness of outcome allocations*")

- ❑ Distributive justice --→ job satisfaction (McIntyre et al., 2002)

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

- ❑ Noninstrumental characteristics (not an exhaustive list):
 - Leader-member relations (e.g., Britt et al., 2004; DeConnick & Stilwell, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2002; Ferris, 1985; Frone, 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005)
 - Group cohesion or group fit (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005)
 - Procedural justice – Fairness of the procedures used to make allocation decisions (e.g., Clay-Warner et al., 2005; DeConnick & Stilwell, 2004; Griffeth & Hom, 2001)

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

- ❑ Instrumental and noninstrumental characteristics can be better understood using the terms from psychological contract literature (see topic chapter *The Psychological Construct: A Big Deal!*, van de Ven, 2007 for more details)
- ❑ A distinction has been made between transactional and relational contracts.
- ❑ **Transactional contracts** are more likely to be short-term, fixed contracts with well-specified performance terms, requiring relatively narrow involvement in the organization. The basis of such contracts is mostly instrumental/economic in nature.
- ❑ **Relational contracts** are open-ended, have loosely defined performance terms, require mutual loyalty and long-term stability. The basis of such contracts can be both emotional and economic.

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

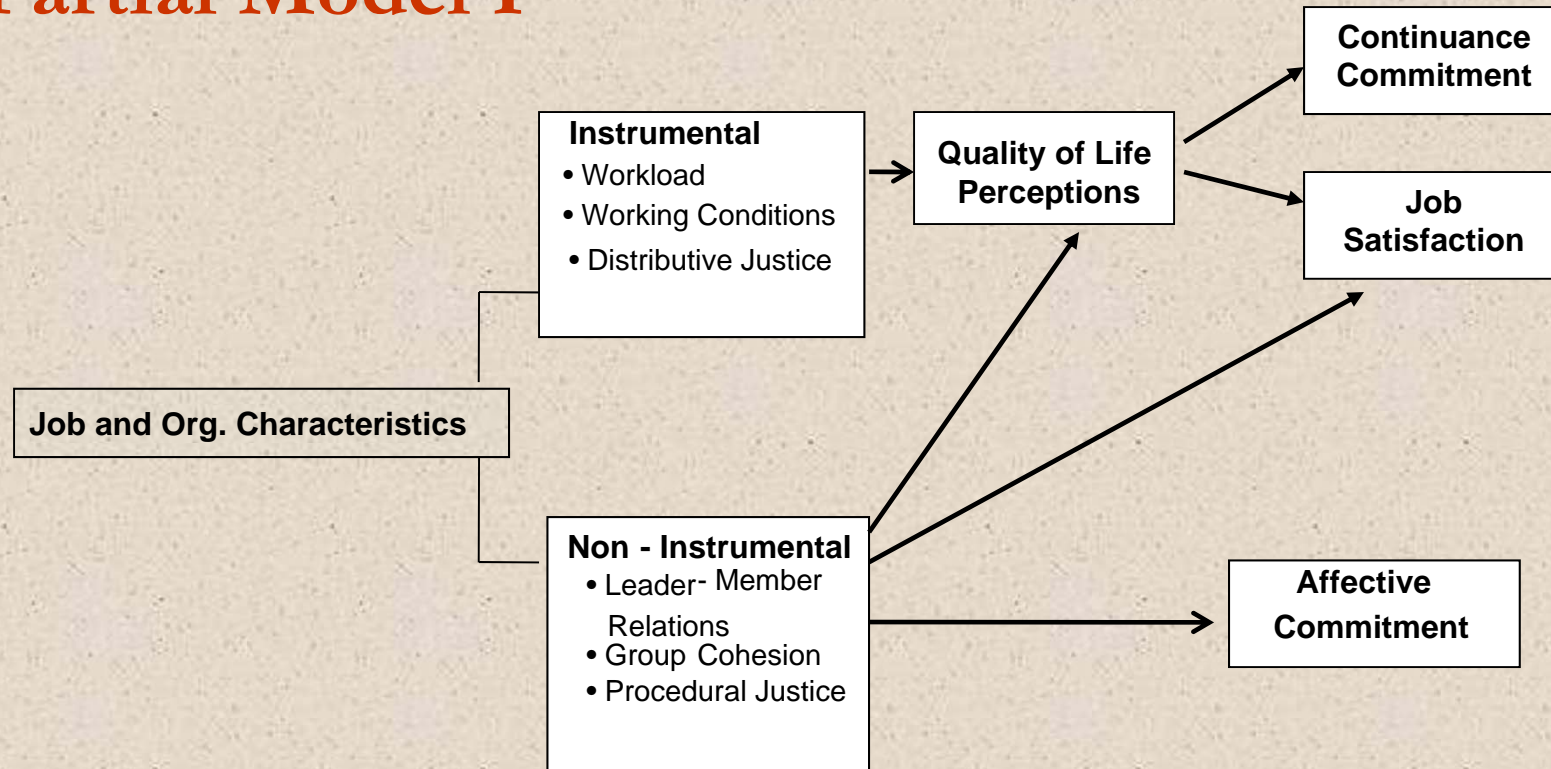
- ❑ Instrumental characteristics playing a role in military turnover seem to reflect violations of **Transactional Contracts**.
- ❑ Noninstrumental characteristics seem to reflect violations of **Relational Contracts**.

Distal Factors

Job and Organizational Characteristics

- ❑ Instrumental characteristics are expected to influence job satisfaction (and possibly continuance commitment) through their effects on QoL perceptions, as suggested by Dowden (2000).
- ❑ Noninstrumental characteristics are expected to influence job satisfaction both directly and through their influence on QoL perceptions.
- ❑ Noninstrumental characteristics are also expected to have a direct influence on affective commitment.

Partial Model I

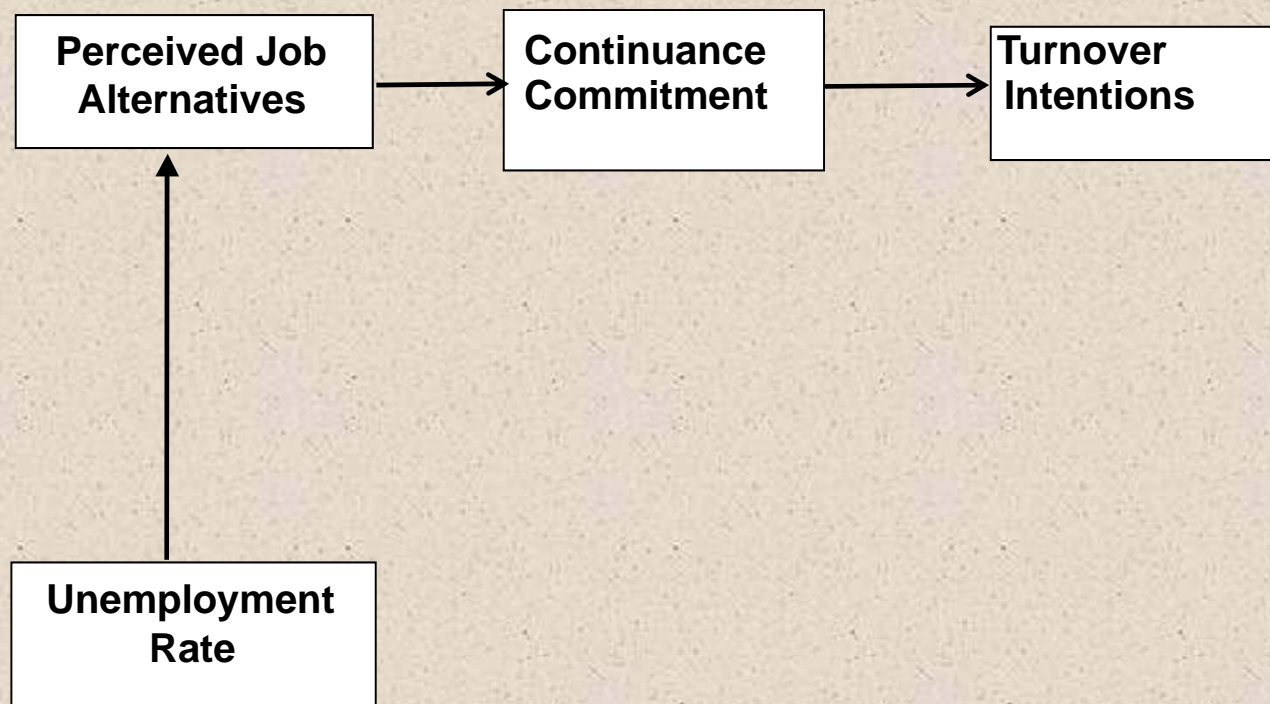


Distal Factors

Perceived Job Alternatives

- ❑ **Probability of finding a satisfactory alternative** is linked to turnover intentions both directly (e.g., Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978) and indirectly (e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 2001; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978) through work attitudes.
- ❑ In the proposed model, perceived job alternatives, which are expected to be influenced by unemployment rate, is hypothesized to have an effect on turnover intentions through their effects on continuance commitment (CC) which taps into perception of the costs associated with leaving the military.

Partial Model II



Intermediate Factors

Individual Characteristics: Person-Environment (P-E) Fit

□ Fit in Terms of Personality Characteristics:

- Schneider's (1987, 1995) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Model
- Effects of single/specific personality traits in the turnover process through job satisfaction
 - *Emotional stability & Agreeableness (Boudreau et al., 2001)*
 - *Job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001)*

Intermediate Factors

Individual Characteristics: P-E Fit

□ Fit in Terms of Values Congruence (i.e., *Person-Organization Fit*):

- The extent to which an employee's personal values and the employing organization's values/culture are congruent or compatible (Kristof, 1996).
- Predicts important organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (e.g., Westerman & Cyr, 2004).
- Can be measured both directly (by asking about the degree of perceived fit) or indirectly (using commensurate measurement techniques)

Intermediate Factors

Individual Characteristics: P-E Fit

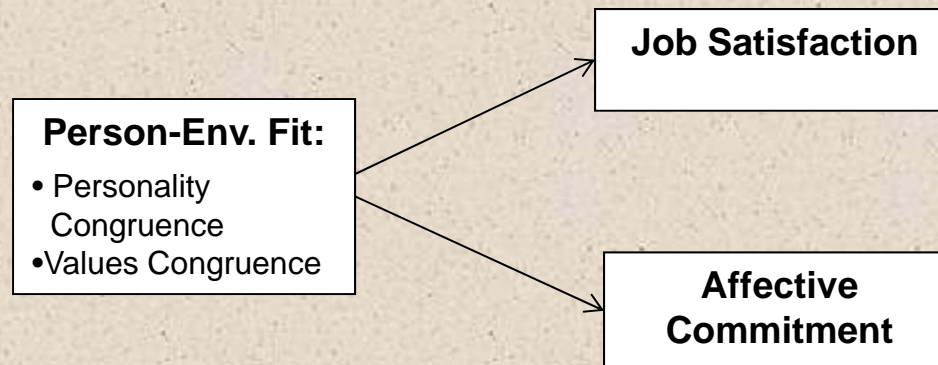
- **Fit in Terms of Values Congruence (i.,e., *Person-Organization Fit*):**
 - Commensurate Measurement - requires measuring the congruence between the person's (work+) values and the dominant (work+) values of the employing organization.
 - Different indices of indirect/actual fit, using commensurate measurement (reflecting the similarity between individual and organizational values):
 - sum of the algebraic differences ($\sum D$),
 - sum of the absolute differences ($\sum |D|$),
 - sum of the squared differences ($\sum D^2$),between the person and organization variables, or
 - correlation between the two profiles (Kristof, 1996).

Intermediate Factors

Individual Characteristics: P-E Fit

- ❑ Both dispositional factors (i.e., personality congruence) and value-based P-O fit are expected to play a role in military turnover through influence over work attitudes, mainly job satisfaction and affective commitment
- ❑ Impact of values congruence is expected to be stronger than that of personality congruence

Partial Model III



Intermediate Factors

Quality of Life Concerns

- ▣ QoL Perceptions – An individual's global sense of well-being nourished by his/her feelings about various life domains, such as standard of living, job itself, leisure, and recreation, health, intimate relationship, and relations with children (Dowden, 2000; Kerce, 1995).

Intermediate Factors

Quality of Life Concerns

- ❑ QoL variables (e.g., equipment, physical working conditions, personnel policies, intimate relationships, relationships with children, health, and standard of living) influence people's intentions to remain in the military (for more detail see Morrow, 2004).
- ❑ QoL factors account for 10 – 20 % of the variance in people's stay – leave decisions over and above the influence of the other variables (see Morrow, 2004).

Intermediate Factors

Quality of Life Concerns

According to Dowden's (2000) model of QoL:

- QoL domains such as income, job characteristics, family domain, and friends and friendship, are significant contributors of global QoL perceptions;
- Enhancing global QoL perceptions has an impact on subjective variables like satisfaction, commitment, and motivation;
- Global QoL perceptions influence important organizational outcomes, mainly retention, absenteeism, and performance through the mediating effects of subjective organizational variables.

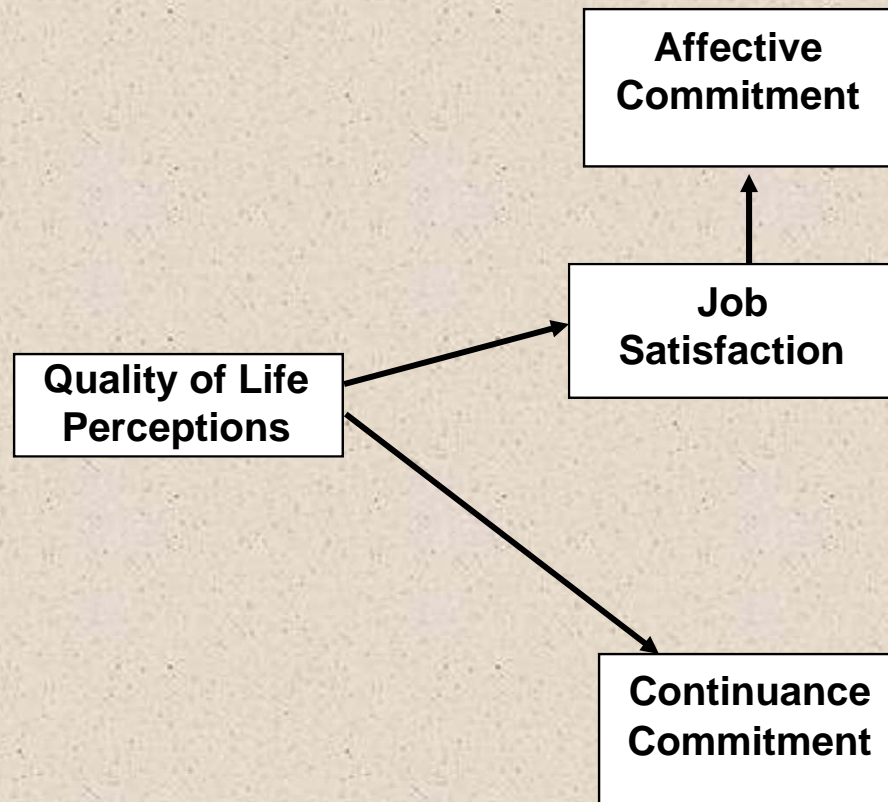
Intermediate Factors

Quality of Life Concerns

Based on the available literature on QoL and turnover, it is hypothesized that:

- QoL factors mediate the effects of job and organizational characteristics on job satisfaction and continuance commitment.
- The effects of QoL factors on affective commitment is expected to be through job satisfaction.

Partial Model IV



Intermediate Factors

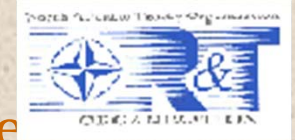


Work Attitudes: Job Satisfaction, Continuance Commitment, and Affective Commitment

Job Satisfaction:

- ❑ Personal and work characteristics are assumed to influence turnover intentions (and hence turnover) through their effects on job satisfaction.
- ❑ Although dissatisfied employees are more likely to quit their jobs than are satisfied employees, the correlation between satisfaction and turnover is moderate at best (Carsten & Spector, 1987).
- ❑ Satisfaction with job is assumed to influence turnover behavior not directly but through turnover thoughts and intentions.

Intermediate Factors



Work Attitudes: Job Satisfaction, Continuance Commitment, and Affective Commitment

Commitment:

- ❑ Commitment as a three component structure (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997):
 - Affective Commitment (AC)
 - Normative Commitment (NC)
 - Continuance Commitment (CC)
- ❑ Commitment is assumed to affect actual turnover behaviors through its effects on behavioral intentions (e.g., Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).
- ❑ Commitment predicts turnover (-.23) better than does overall satisfaction (-.19). The predictive power of commitment is even larger for military samples (-.28) (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Intermediate Factors



Work Attitudes: Job Satisfaction, Continuance Commitment, and Affective Commitment

Relationship between Satisfaction and Commitment

- Lack of clear causal relationship between satisfaction and commitment in relation to employee withdrawal.
- Some studies suggest that satisfaction is a precursor of organizational commitment and that commitment mediates the relationship between satisfaction and turnover intentions (e.g., Heffner & Gade, 2003; Williams & Hazer, 1986).
- The relationship between commitment and satisfaction seems much more complicated than a simple unidirectional relationship.
- A cyclical relationship has been suggested by the Farkas and Tetrick (1989) study.

Intermediate Factors

Work Attitudes: Job Satisfaction, Continuance Commitment, and Affective Commitment



Based on the available evidence it is expected that:

- Both AC and CC (AC to a greater extent than CC) and job satisfaction contribute to turnover intentions.
- The nature of the relationship between AC and satisfaction is likely to be cyclical in nature.



- CC is expected to be influenced by satisfaction/dissatisfaction with specific, especially, extrinsic aspects of job, such as pay and benefits.

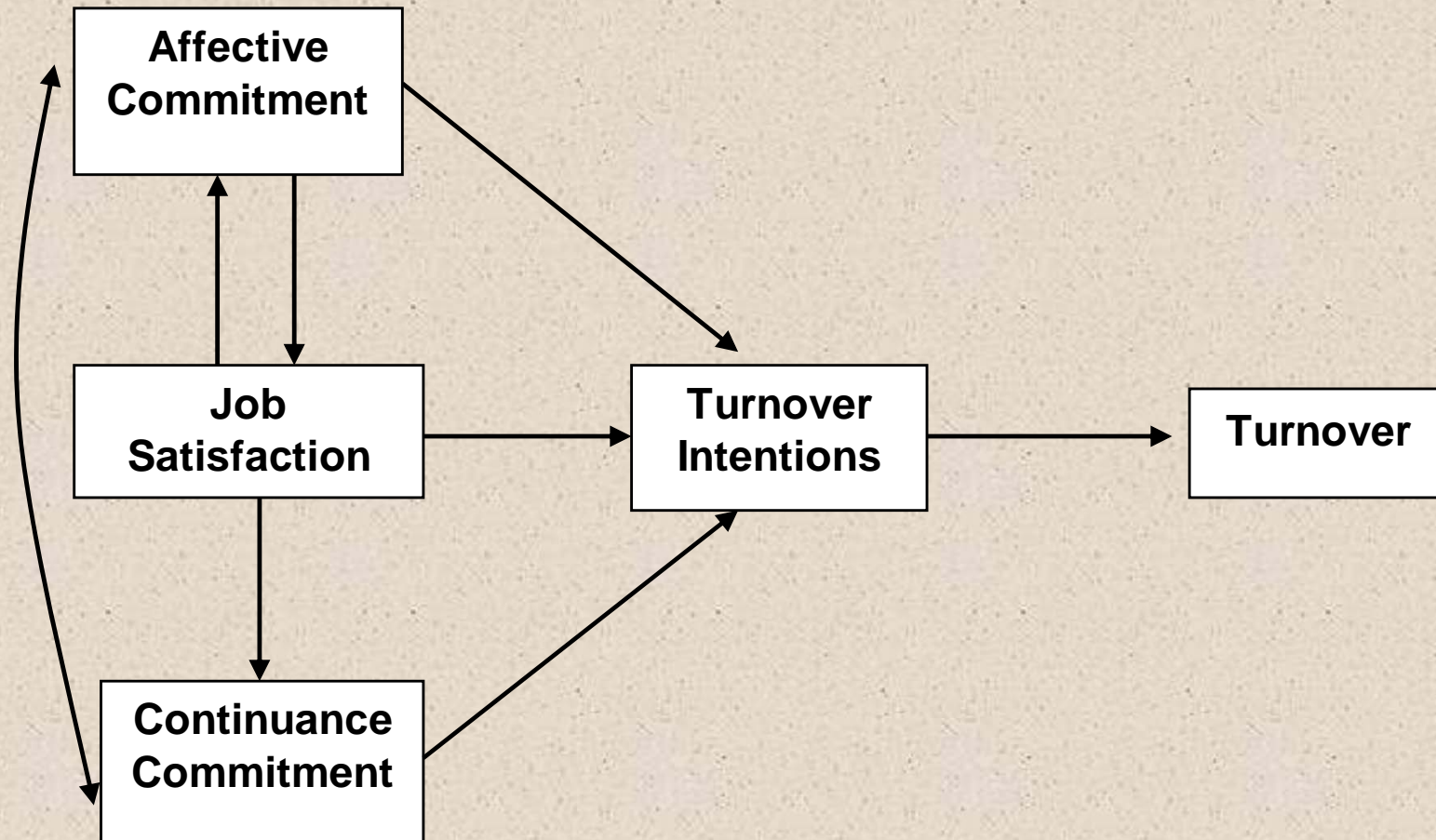
Partial Model V



Proximal Factors Turnover Intentions

- ❑ Explain a large portion of turnover variance.
- ❑ Mediate the relationship between job-related attitudes and turnover behavior.
- ❑ Are strong predictors of turnover than overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the work itself, and organizational commitment. Weighted average correlation coefficient between behavioral intentions and attrition was reported to be .50 by Steel and Ovalle (1984).

Partial Model VI



Proximal Factors

A Macro Economic Factor: Unemployment Rate

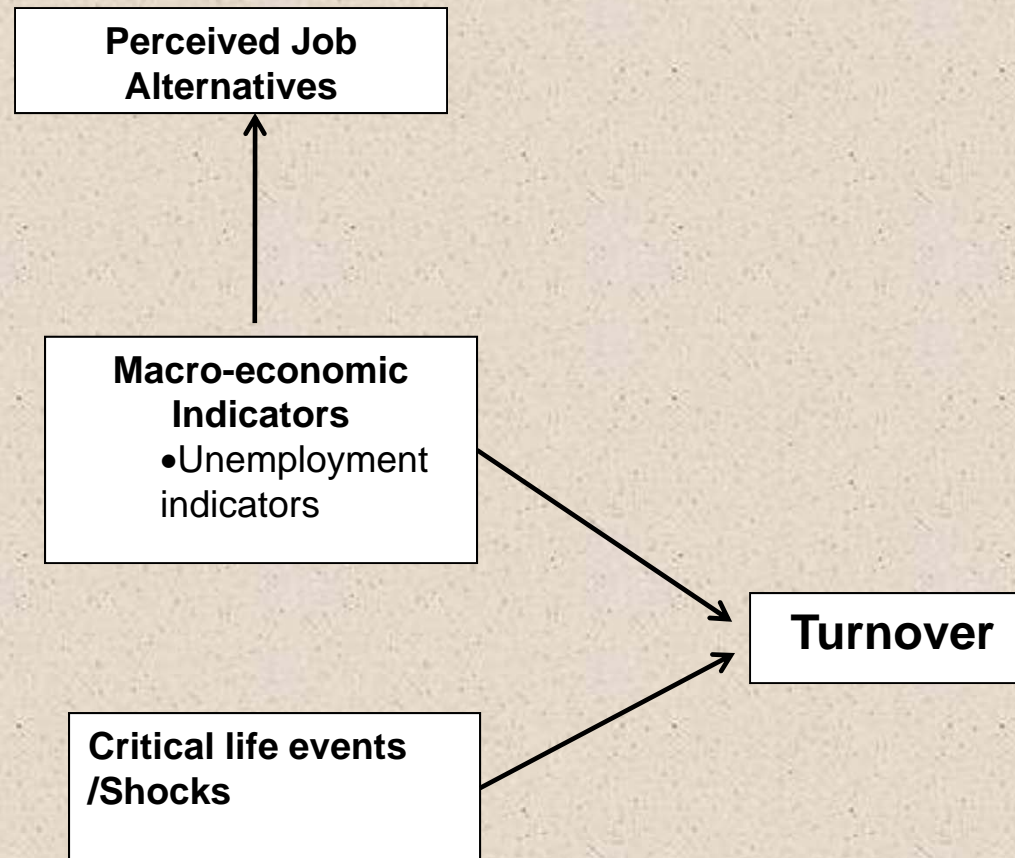
- ❑ Strong, negative correlation between unemployment rate and voluntary turnover (sharing up to 70% of the variance)
- ❑ Correlations between job satisfaction and voluntary turnover are reported to be stronger when unemployment rate is lower (e.g., Carsten & Spector, 1987).
- ❑ Unemployment rate is expected to influence voluntary turnover both directly and through perceived job opportunities.

Proximal Factors

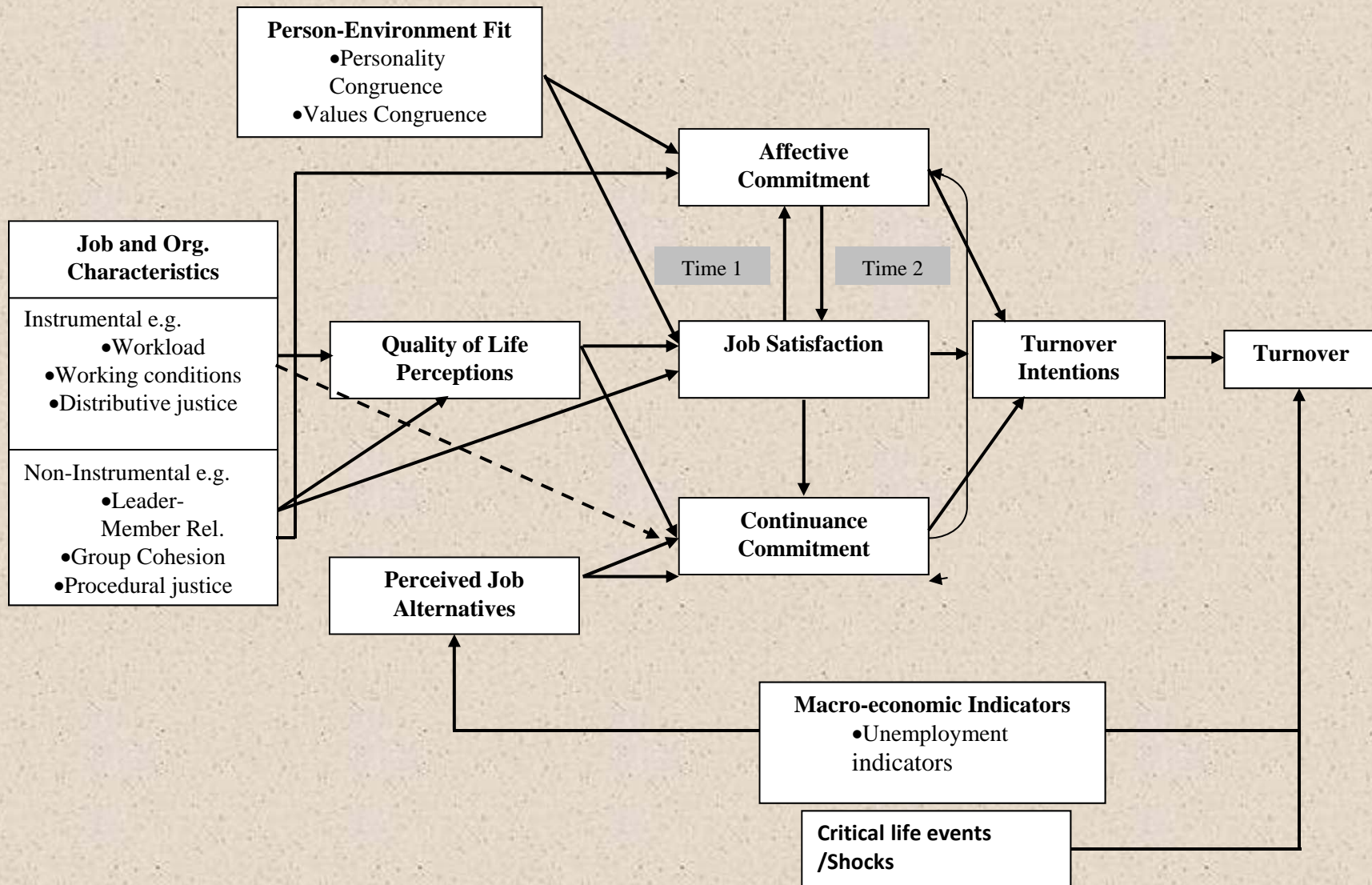
Critical Life Events/Shocks

- ❑ Turnover is not always a “slow burn,” deliberative process (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2005)
- ❑ Unexpected life events or shocks cause voluntary turnover more often than accumulated job dissatisfaction (Lee & Mitchell, 1994)
- ❑ Work-related shocks seem more avoidable
- ❑ A reliable taxonomy for shocks (work-related vs. nonwork-related; negative vs. positive etc.) that is more relevant for military members is needed.

Partial Model VII



Proposed Structural Model of Military Turnover



Conclusions

- ❑ Turnover is treated as a product of an individual's subjective experience of the job and the org.
- ❑ A micro level, "individual-centered" decision-making approach is adopted
- ❑ Reflects the complex nature of the turnover phenomenon, which, in many cases, cannot be fully understood using macro algorithms only.
 - "Lavers are not economic agents, who make rational choices to maximize expected utility. Instead they are actors, who negotiate complex social scenarios with reference to habit, learned schemata and values" (Morrell, 2004, p. 345).
- ❑ Treats turnover as a more manageable and predictable phenomenon by the organization.

Conclusions

- ❑ The proposed conceptual framework is **still** a small step in right direction.
- ❑ However, it needs to be further refined before subjected to empirical testing.
- ❑ Refinement/revision efforts may focus on the following issues.

Conclusions

Needed Refinements

- ❑ First, the proposed model implicitly focuses on late turnover. Efforts may be directed at identifying antecedents of early turnover and, perhaps, linking them to both recruitment and late turnover processes.

Conclusions

Needed Refinements

- ❑ Second, demographic variables, such as gender and ethnicity, are not directly addressed in the model; they are assumed to have an influence on work attitudes especially through quality of life perceptions.
- ❑ A more thorough examination of the demographic variables critical in military turnover is needed and the mechanisms through which these demographic variables contribute to employee withdrawal should be examined.

Conclusions

Refinements

- Third, the only macro factor included in the model is unemployment rate. Other labor market conditions, such as absolute and relative pay levels, occupational unemployment rates, and hiring rates may be incorporated into the model.

Conclusions

Refinements

- ❑ Fourth, there is a need to develop a “shock taxonomy” to be able to make more precise predictions concerning the role of shocks in military turnover.

Conclusions

Refinements

- ❑ Finally, the model should be empirically tested using a longitudinal design so that further refinements can be made based on empirical evidence.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- Military Organizations should routinely monitor employee attitudes, mainly satisfaction and commitment (of both types), and factors contributing to the development of these attitudes.
- Systematic large-scale surveys tapping into quality life perceptions, values congruence, and satisfaction and commitment levels of the members can be used as proactive tools to minimize dysfunctional turnover.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- ▣ Strategies can be developed based on the sources of problems. For instance, while identification of problems concerning person-organization fit (i.e., values incongruence) may call for strategies directed at recruitment and selection (and perhaps training), problems associated with QoL perceptions, or work-nonwork balance, may require strategies aiming to improve working conditions.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- As dissatisfaction and lack of commitment are not the only sources of turnover, organizations should pay more attention to macro level factors.
- Strategies can be developed to forecast the labor-market-dependent turnover so that appropriate proactive actions can be taken to compensate for the expected losses.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- Assuming that the role of shocks has been established, more thorough, systematic approaches can be adopted to examine factors contributing to decision to stay or leave.
- Exit interviews can be designed to understand the types of shocks as well as to identify groups of leavers distinguished based on the nature of shocks experienced.
- Exit interview data should be analyzed to understand the factors that caused good people to leave.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- Supervisors should be trained to monitor and intervene as speedy as possible after learning that a well performing subordinate has experienced a shock.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

- It is critical to understand for whom and under what conditions a “slow burning, dissatisfaction-based” withdrawal is more likely and for whom and under what conditions critical life events (of different types) are likely to trigger turnover. Different strategies can then be developed to target different types of potential quitters.
- Such analyses may also help decision makers identify cases for which interventions are unlikely or unnecessary, resulting in significant cost savings.

COMMENTS...